

# Conquering Chronic Leadership Deficiencies

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Business leaders cannot adequately accommodate the human ramifications of the technology tsunamis crashing over their company. Why haven't business scholars figured out how to overcome these chronic weaknesses so they could empower leaders to employ systematic processes to conquer them? You will see below many laudable efforts to do that. However, none of them are adequate because they all fail to penetrate to the root causes – they rely on inspired empirical insights and improvement processes for managing slices of increasingly problematic mental mechanisms. We also desperately need a new approach because the rise of AI is about to make massive incursions into all organizations.

## Acknowledging and Answering a Clarian Call

From his perch atop the World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab has for decades interacted with top business, political, economic, and academic leaders. We need to pay careful attention to the underlying leadership inadequacies he describes within the business world.

In his book, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, Schwab identifies the nature and implications of many amazing technologies currently exploding around us. However, he also provides multiple views of chronic deficiencies current leaders have for handling the human-nature consequences of the onslaught of these technology disruptions. Schwab identifies “social models” and being “trapped in linear and non-disruptive thinking” to describe the nature of these structural technology-driven problems. He also states, “The requisite institutional framework to govern the diffusion of innovation and mitigate the disruption is inadequate at best and, at worst, absent altogether.” What fundamentals of leadership have experts been missing?

Schwab further asserts, “The question for all industries and companies, without exception, is no longer ‘Am I going to be disrupted?’ but ‘When is disruption coming, what form will it take, and how will it affect me and my organization?’” He also states, “it is a leader’s ability to continually learn, adapt and challenge his or her own conceptual and operating models of success that will distinguish the next generation of successful business leaders.” We must learn to rigorously understand and systematically manage these still-mysterious social, institutional, conceptual, and operating models and frameworks.

## Generalize: Integrating Insights into Business Leadership

Following are some powerful insights into leadership deficiencies identified over the previous half century. We have taken a very long time to finally generalize these empirical theories.

### Exposing the Nature of Leadership Inadequacies

#	Enigmatic Mental Issues	Book Title	Authors	Date
A	Espoused theories vs. theories in use	<i>Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness</i>	Argyris & Schon	1974
B	Tacit knowledge	<i>The Knowledge-Creating Company</i>	Nonaka & Takeuchi	1995
C	Business culture change	<i>Deep Change</i>	Robert E Quinn	1996
D	Knowing vs. doing	<i>The Knowing-Doing Gap</i>	Pfeffer & Sutton	2000
E	People process	<i>Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done</i>	Bossidy & Charan	2002
F	Exposé of simplistic business books	<i>The Halo Effect...and the Eight Other Business Delusions...</i>	Phil Rosenzweig	2014
G	Technology-caused leadership defects	<i>The Fourth Industrial Revolution</i>	Klaus Schwab	2017

Here are brief notes on the above observations about enigmatic leadership and execution factors:

- A. What is the root cause of these divergent types of theories? Why do we often fail to act like we claim we do? Why does this dysfunction endure a half-century after it was revealed?
- B. Tacit knowledge “involves intangible factors such as personal belief, perspective, and the value system.” “Logical processes refer to the conscious thinking or reasoning process that can be expressed in terms of words...Nonlogical processes involve inexpressible mental processes such as judgments, decisions, or actions in practical affairs. These processes are unconscious.” This is a similar mental process to “implicit bias” from psychology and sociology. Where do explicit and tacit knowledge reside in the mind?
- C. “Our top management people are ill-equipped to deal with the realities of our situation. We need sweeping changes. Their tools, obtained at the best business schools, are simply inadequate for facing our current competitive environment. They know how to manage, not how to lead.” That was true when written in 1996, and it remains true today. What keeps us from conquering this?
- D. “Why is so much emphasis sometimes placed on what people say, and so little emphasis placed on what they do or enable others to do?” “Excessive reliance on the organization’s memory [culture] means that existing practices are rarely thought about, let alone questioned or examined to see if they make sense in the context of what managers know and are trying to accomplish.” “Scholars who study this kind of thinking and the actions associated with it have described it using terms such as “habits of mind,” “performance programs,” “programmed behavior,” and “automatic processing.” We must do much better at explaining the nature of these observations.
- E. “The people process is more important than either the strategy or operations processes.” “If you don’t get the people process right, you will never fulfill the potential of your business” The authors land a crucial point, but they never define “people process” or try to explain how it might operate fundamentally differently from the other two types of processes. What mechanism did they miss?
- F. The referenced set of “best practices” books supplied simplistic solutions, which satisfy the need for success without providing the success needed. As with all simplistic solutions, these books provided temporary discomfort-relief of leaders who realized they did not have a good grip on crucial success factors, which only postponed the longer-term pain of failure. “Start with In Search of Excellence, draw a line to Built to Last, link it to What Really Works, and then extend it all the way to Good to Great. What pattern do we see when we connect these dots? ... By the time we get to the last two, there are grandiose claims about virtual guarantees of success and immutable laws of physics.” “George Anders of the Wall Street Journal wrote that Good to Great offered a picture of the business world...of homespun values and old-fashioned virtues where everyone feels safe and secure.” More than a generation of business leaders got seduced by these simplistic solutions because they didn’t understand the root causes of their problems.
- G. Schwab’s clarion call to address chronic leadership deficiencies was analyzed in the first section.

My extensive successful executive experiences, which included leading senior managers and individual contributors who executed at a high level but negatively impacted those around them, plus brilliant businesspeople who couldn’t execute consistently, revealed that involuntary activities were central to many business problems. I crashed into another aspect of automatic human activities when I took over a business that was failing and encountered massive resistance to incorporating the culture (strategy; business model) changes needed to save the business. Although the leaders all agreed that the new direction could save the business, they kept operating as they always had. They were trapped in just watching themselves fail when a viable success path existed.

After saving that business through relentlessly driving the required culture changes via brute force, it became obvious to me that we had to overcome several problematic forms of involuntary human activities to lead organizations successfully. I then launched a systematic study of insights brilliant scholars had created into various aspects of business underperformance, including those above.

Generalizing the many isolated theories about unintentional activities within the business community provided a powerful basis to outline a new general theory of the mind. However, I realized that focusing just on inscrutable business issues would likely be inadequate. I then began a long-term organized search of enigmatic issues in many other domains, including politics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, religion, education, history, values, economics, communications, science, and philosophy, along with empirical theories investigators had created into their nature.

## ***Universalize: Leveraging Insights from Outside of Business***

In the search for mysterious human-activities problems occurring outside of business, I came across many penetrating but seemingly isolated insights, starting a century ago, including the following.

### **Mysterious Human-Nature Characteristics**

#	Enigmatic Mental Issues	Book Title	Authors	Date
a	Big lies	Mein Kampf	Adolf Hitler	1925
b	Cognitive dissonance	A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance	Leon Festinger	1957
c	Science paradigms	The Structure of Scientific Revolutions	Thomas Kuhn	1962
d	Reality constructions	The Social Construction of Reality	Berger & Luckmann	1966
e	Reality reconstructions	Snapping	Conway & Siegelman	1978
f	Two mental modes	Thinking, Fast and Slow	Daniel Kahneman	2013

Here are notes on the above insights into inscrutable human-nature mechanisms:

- a. *Politics*: Hitler exploited big lies with devastating effect. “In the big lie there is always a certain force of credibility, because the broad masses of a nation are always more easily corrupted in the deeper strata of their emotional nature than consciously or voluntarily. Thus, in the primitive simplicity of their minds they more readily fall victims to the big lie than the small lie.” We can now see that endlessly repeating big lies embeds them in the automatic mental mode as tenacious certainties, which emasculates the thinking mode so it cannot recognize contradictory facts. Now, some Pied Piper politicians are constructing delusional beliefs in millions of voters through the big-lie process on an industrial scale because they exploit unmediated mass-communication channels. The viability of democracies, and therefore the environment in which Western businesses operate, requires that we overcome this dysfunction!
- b. *Social Psychology*: Cognitive dissonance occurs when people encounter contradictions between their beliefs and verifiable data. 360° surveys used in business is an excellent example, where recipients routinely start out in denial and even aggressively reject the results, but the format eventually causes most of them to accept that their belief about their self-image is erroneous.
- c. *Philosophy of Science*: Kuhn made an enormous contribution to the concept of internal certainties. His Structure of Scientific Revolutions is a seminal book that we need to understand, expand, and generalize. The concept of paradigm is in our common language, but we must create a much more powerful definition of it, place it in a specific part of the automatic mind, and explain the enormous impact it has on our problem-solving capabilities. We also should recognize that science paradigms are the same mental process that we identify as worldviews, mindsets, and business cultures.
- d. *Sociology*: This assertion, which seems counter-intuitive to many people, refers to our certainties or beliefs. How can our certainties, which we experience as so profoundly and inherently real, be social constructions? They are, and we need to pay close attention to this phenomenon because failing to manage this strange artifact of human nature will block our path to a desirable future for individuals, businesses, and societies, including the whole West.

- e. *Religion*: Snapping focuses on cult conversions. It was updated in 1995 and incorporates many famous examples including Patty Hearst, Jim Jones, David Koresh, PTSD, and political “brain washing.” We are currently suffering through many people having their empowering certainties deconstructed, including about the viability of our crucial social systems.
- f. *Psychology/Economics*: Famous for popularizing that we operate in two distinct modes, which Kahneman labeled, not very descriptively, System 1 and System 2. That our automatic mode works rapidly, and our thinking mode more slowly, is but one of the characteristics we must incorporate into any general model of human nature.

## **Breaking Through Success Barriers**

It can aid our quest for a universal solution if we figure out why so many excellent scholars addressing our enigmatic problems previously failed to find a root-cause solution to these human-nature issues.

### **Transcending the *Silo* Barrier**

This is the topic we discussed in the last two sections. As researchers get increasingly better at any topic, they typically become more specialized. As a result, wise scholars have been focused on specific parts of the human-nature elephant. In this case, we needed a holistic, overarching approach, and we now have a solid view of the nature of this whole automatic-mode pachyderm. This barrier is situational; the next three result from poorly understood and managed human-nature characteristics.

### **Penetrating the *Elusive* Barrier**

Most involuntary activities occur outside of our awareness – they elude detection. Other people, and surprisingly even we, cannot see what is happening in this part of our mind. It is very difficult to understand and manage stealth automatic activities. In organizations, we use a 360° or multi-rater survey to enable becoming *aware* of our behavior habits. To *observe* our involuntary behavior habits as we enact them, so we create the possibility of reconstructing counterproductive ones, is much more difficult and usually requires a professional transformation coach to make that happen in organizations. The equivalent in personal lives would be a therapist or counselor. Our internal certainties create an even greater barrier.

### **Overcoming the *Illusive* Barrier**

In what is the greatest and most inaccessible mystery of human nature, the social environment imperceptibly constructs certainties hidden within our automatic mode that operate independent of any correspondence with facts or with success needs, and that are often opposed to established facts.

Ubiquitous digital media is making this problem increasingly destructive to our future. This has led to a culture of chronic pretending induced in victims, especially in business and politics, caused by being manipulated by naïve exploitive actors and malicious charlatans for their own power and fortune.

Exposing the increasingly dysfunctional aspects of our internal certainties creates cognitive dissonance, resulting in deep discomfort, so most people, most of the time, tenaciously resist examining their internal certainties. Our successes and well-being could withstand that reflexive mind phobia until recently. Now, failing to penetrate deeply into this potent characteristic of involuntary activities will cause individuals, businesses, and even whole societies to continue staggering down a path of lost opportunities and increasing mediocrity.

Internal certainties do not automatically create external facts nor align with success needs, although most people act as if they do. Our goal has to be the opposite – to align our internal certainties with external realities. Because we live in a rapidly changing world, that will require that we learn to make systematic and increasingly frequent reconstructions of our devastatingly powerful internal certainties.

## **Transforming the *Worldview* Barrier**

Here is a conundrum we now face: **Managing worldviews is one of the breakthroughs we need, and we need a new worldview to create that breakthrough!**

Worldviews are specific incarnations of internal certainties. They provide stealth assumptions about some domain, including at the business and even societal levels, which become the foundation for solving problems. Worldviews are a generalization of Thomas Kuhn's concept of science paradigms, which means normal problem-solving occurs within an established worldview, while revolutionary problem-solving requires reconstructing a prevailing worldview.

## **Creating Transformational Progress**

We need to accumulate penetrating insights from business and other domains, as outlined above. Next, we must identify fundamental principles. We can begin that process by explicitly focusing on the distinction between our brain and mind. The brain is a physical entity, so science is very effective at studying it. The human mind is a unique non-physical phenomenon that interacts bidirectionally in still-mysterious ways with the brain. Science is so amazingly powerful that if it was sufficient to solve the many human-nature problems raised above, we would have root-cause solutions by now. We should suspect, and indeed that is the case, that we need a unique theory to master the mind. That is particularly true because the elusive, illusive, and ubiquitous mental mechanism of constructed certainties is frustratingly spread out in the brain, but we can model it effectively at the mind level.

The next step is to explicitly embrace that we operate in two distinct modes – a thinking mode and an automatic mode. That is not breaking news. We just need to generalize the many insights identified above of espoused-theories vs. theories-in-use, explicit vs. tacit knowledge, thought-about processes vs. habits of mind and programmed behavior, logical vs. nonlogical processes, conscious reasoning vs. inexpressible mental processes, managing vs. leading, knowing vs. doing, valid information vs. big lies, normal vs. revolutionary science, thinking slow vs. fast, plus such other well-known insights as conscious vs. unconscious, rational vs. emotional intelligence, and cognitive behavioral therapy.

The nature of business transformations, which also applies at societal levels, requires us to work through some conundrums. Here is another one: **The required transformation in how we create systematic progress requires fundamental progress in how we create systematic transformations!**

We need a comprehensive theory, or general model, of the human mind that must include constructed certainties in some form that incorporates business cultures, self-images, problem-solving worldviews, and paradigm shifts. This will be a necessary process to avoid high levels of business failures and career derailments and to create the framework for a sustainable series of differing forms of successes. Any standard model of the mind must also address other types of certainties, including how to overcome disinformation and Big Lies, which will be necessary to avoid the collapse of democratic governing systems. Additionally, it must explain the construction and maintenance of aspirational values in the US bequeathed by its founders, and in other societies of the West.

The required theory of human nature must also include how to manage the compulsive need to avoid or escape discomfort. This will empower us to manage such dysfunctional business processes as the wildly hyped best-practices books that enamored the business community for such a long time. In general terms, it will help us overcome seduction traps primarily in the form of simplistic solutions, which is also currently having an enormously negative impact on areas outside of business, and spectacularly in politics. If not overcome, these will have indirect impacts on businesses.

In addition to a comprehensive theory, which the thinking mode executes, we must propagate an automatic-mode worldview, which empowers people to understand and use the theory.

Transformations of involuntary activities happen through feelings and repetitions, not through knowledge acquisition from information, so any viable general theory for understanding and managing the human mind must include feelings-based processes.

## 2Selves Theory and 2Selves Worldview

During and after a successful executive career in the computer field, I focused careful attention on problematic business activities. As I kept observing people and companies watch themselves fail when viable solutions were available, I found it quite useful to think of our activities descriptively as if we exist as two independent “selves” – an intentional *thinking-self* and an unintentional automatic self, or *auto-self*. That led to a new theory, which provides a comprehensive model of human nature that reveals the underlying nature of the above mysteries and many more. *2Selves Theory* incorporates key elements of any comprehensive theory of the mind, including *certainty illusions*, the *comfort imperative*, and the *counteracting principle*. As with all effective theories, we need an empowering worldview to create a foundation, which directly inducing *2Selves Worldview* provides.

Because of multiple ways in which we cannot handle the auto-self-based ramifications of technology tsunamis crashing over us, our future business successes, self-governing viability, and personal well-being require that we finally figure out how to master our involuntary activities. 2Selves Theory and 2Selves Worldview do that. 2Selves Theory is the first, and currently the only, general model of the mind that identifies the common root cause of the many enigmas described in this paper. Using its systematic transformation process has repeatedly proved effective in behavior-habit and business-culture transformations. Propagating 2Selves Worldview empowers people to notice, understand, and manage occurrences of involuntary activities in any domain including business and politics.

Certainty illusions are a broad mental mechanism that operates *independent* of external facts or success needs. *Certainty delusions* are an extreme case that operate *opposed* to known facts. Certainty illusions cause people to become unable to recognize contradictory facts, and that occurs on steroids for certainty delusions. Certainty illusions can be healthy, benign, or malignant. A chronic problem we face is that most people cannot tell the difference between thinking-self-based thoughts and auto-self-based certainties or beliefs. We have now reached the point where that chronic deficiency will block a successful future for individuals, companies, and societies. Healthy certainty illusions include providing effective business cultures when successes first emerge, establishing hidden worldviews to empower us to solve complex problems, and the creating mental patriotic “glue” that holds societies together. They also sometimes serve as powerful, seemingly realistic fantasies that people can use for coping with troublesome setbacks, achieving big goals, and experiencing awesome feelings.

Malignant certainty illusions include business cultures after the changing environment has rendered them dysfunctional. Terminal malignancies arise when shady characters manipulate people through

disinformation to construct certainty delusions. Two infamous examples are Jim Jones, who caused individual suicides in Guyana, and the belief held by millions of voters that the 2020 US presidential election was stolen, which is causing democracy suicide. If that assertion offends you, try using the cognitive dissonance you experience as an alert that you don't have needed access to your certainty illusions. You have been seduced into having a certainty delusion embedded in your auto-self!

This article shows how to overcome leadership deficiencies to create sustainable careers and a series of repeated business successes. That cannot happen unless you learn to manage involuntary activities, and particularly certainty illusions. This requires a worldview transformation regarding human nature. That is extremely difficult to accomplish selectively for the mental world. It would be like believing eclipses are natural, but earthquakes are supernatural, processes in the physical world. Those who idly succumb to deliberate manipulations and endlessly repeated Hitleresque big lies regarding the viability of our elections, legal systems, security services, alliances, parts of science, and the constitutional foundation of Western societies will not be our successful business leaders. That will block them from becoming able to make the worldview transformations needed to change business cultures – the business-model and strategy reconstructions required to keep pace with relentless technological disruptions.

## The Next Mega-Revolution for the West

This article focuses on overcoming chronic barriers to success in businesses and other types of organization due primarily to the ramifications of massive technology disruptions. In order to create a viable theory and worldview to accomplish that, we were forced to look at the bigger picture. While we can solve most of our chronic business problems without dealing with broader issues, human-nature-caused dysfunctions elsewhere in society will eventually come back to have huge business impacts. Solving those problems is beyond scope of this article, but I outline the bigger picture below.

The following worldview-progression roadmap demonstrates a new view of the Western history in terms of fundamental capabilities in major periods based on the number and types of overarching worldviews. It also illustrates how a spectacular positive future is now possible for us. You can see a more detailed explanation of the elements of this roadmap here: <https://www.2selves.com/worldview>.

### Roadmap of Worldview Progression for the West

				Distinct Destinies			
Major Periods	Ancient	Greek Phil.	Dark Age	Modern West	Mediocrity	2Selves	
Approx. dates	<300BC	300BC-300	300-1400	1770-1970	1970->?	Now?->	
Worldviews	Spiritual Domain	polytheism	polytheism	Papacy	Christian/many	many	many
	Physical Domain	fog	secular	fog	Science	Science	Science
	Mental Domain	fog	secular	fog	Enlightenment	manipulation	2Selves
# of Worldviews	1	2	1	2+	2-	3	

The ancient Greek philosophy revolution brought the West alive with respect to solving many types of problems. However, they never got to science or robust technology development, so their innovations were eventually snuffed out by a worldview elimination that caused the millennium-long Dark Age.

The West's *physical-domain revolution* (aka, science revolution) indirectly transformed the worldview-based belief that the physical world was controlled by capricious supernatural forces to believing it is controlled by understandable and manageable natural forces. That laid the foundation for our massive

technological progress. That transformation created the first enduring discontinuous ascent in the maturation of the human species. The physical-domain revolution, along with the Enlightenment, which helped manage idiosyncrasies in the mental domain, created widespread success, prosperity, and well-being for the West. Those transformations provided an unfair competitive advantage for the West for about two centuries before it eventually spread throughout the advanced world.

A new “dusk age” of ubiquitous manipulations we are currently descending into will not be as terrible as the Dark Age because we will still have the fruits of the physical-domain revolution driving technology development, but our prosperity, well-being, shared values, freedoms, and dignity will likely suffer devastating descents, perhaps like in Putin’s Russia today.

The West’s *mental-domain revolution* will transform the belief that our certainty illusions (and delusions!) inherently correspond to something outside of our mind to the belief that they are constructions that may or may not align with external facts or success needs. 2Selfs Theory and 2Selfs Worldview will eventually replace the legacy of the Enlightenment, which is becoming increasingly ineffective, for managing our mental world. This mental revolution will construct a third overarching worldview that creates an unfair competitive advantage across domains that adopt it early, and should eventually lead to the second discontinuous ascent in the maturation of the human species. **Our individual, business, and societal destinies will depend on creating systematic capabilities to transform our automatic activities, and especially our certainty illusions!**

With 2Selfs Theory, we now understand that the worldview foundation of the Modern West was inherently unstable and why we have now hit a tipping point in our progress path. We will either continue down a tragic decline of ubiquitous manipulations and chronic pretending or launch the West’s and humanity’s first *direct* overarching worldview transformation to an unprecedented level of accomplishments, as illustrated in the right column of the diagram above.

## **Business Success Cannot Be What It Used to Be**

The glory days of the Modern West are irretrievably behind us. We have not hit a cyclical, but a tragic systemic, breakdown where we will either continue feebly descending into mediocrity, as indicated by rising manipulations, social chaos, and authoritarian election successes, or heroically ascend to an unprecedented level of greatness. As part of our descent, overarching business-model and leadership beliefs that have produced the West’s prosperity are rapidly becoming inadequate and even obsolete.

Successful societies will now be the ones that launch an emancipating human-nature revolution first. However, business leaders cannot wait for that global transformation. The successful leaders will be the ones who learn to conquer automatic human activities now!

A previous business-success mantra was *continuous learning*, which is a thinking-self activity. Now we must add to that the necessity for *periodic transforming*, which is an auto-self activity.

The question for all areas of human activities, without exception, is no longer are the ramifications of involuntary activities going to impact me? But what forms will it take, in how many ways will it affect me, my organization, and my society, and how can I, and we, learn to manage these systematically?

It is an individual’s, organization’s, and society’s ability to master involuntary activities and to transform periodically and systematically that will distinguish the next generation of successful business, political, military, NGO, other types of leaders, and the endurability of democratic societies.